

Refuting pro-FDG book 1

Refuting Kaunteya dāsa's book

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Section Summary

In Cc *Madhya* 25.49, it is stated that one has to accept direct statements and avoid his own opinions, whereas the author(s)' presentation in their book follows the opposite pattern. Śrīla Prabhupāda also states that any conflict of instructions in the teachings of guru and *sādhū* must be reconciled with *śāstras* (Cc *Madhya* 20.352). Hence, with "Books are the basis" being the principle, the direct statements from the SB 4.12.32 purport that a woman who is not extraordinary cannot be a *dīkṣā-guru* is the final statement. Whereas, the author(s) of the book in contention, particularly Kaunteya dāsa, unscrupulously discounts SB 4.12.32 purport through misrepresentation of the Vedic and the *pāñcarātrika* scriptures. The summary of their book is as below:

1. The audacious statements of the author(s), cited below, expose their utter ignorance of *śāstra-pramāṇa* and Vedic culture. We refute all these points through *śāstra-sādhū-guru-vākyas*.
 - They state: "Not seen even a single clear statement from any *śāstra* prohibiting women from initiating disciples.", "No rule preventing ladies from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus* in the *pāñcarātrika* system."
 - They state: "*Upavīta* thread not integral to chanting Gāyatrī mantras."
 - They state: "In any case, Śrīla Prabhupāda never said that wearing the sacred thread was an indispensable prerequisite to become *dīkṣā-guru*."
 - They state: "Even Lord Brahmā, the head of our sampradāya, at one point was initiated by a "woman," a divine feminine personality [Goddess Sarasvatī]"
2. The author(s) repeatedly and expertly use ellipses to perform "literary magic:"¹

1 Hence forward in our writing the compound "magic ellipses" is used to denote this act of the author(s).

- To stitch own narrative on Sacred Thread & women being brāhmaṇa (hiding actual opinion of Śrīla Prabhupāda)
 - To distort the meaning of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements and create their own narrative that ISKCON women need not be protected by father, husband, or son.
 - To create their own narrative that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not care for a Woman's traditional position as per Vedic culture, and that he wanted different rules for ISKCON's women.
3. The author(s) repeatedly misrepresent and misquote scriptures:
- Idea of females wearing the sacred thread – Fabricated Parvati Statue with sacred thread exposed; atheistic views deriding Vedic culture exposed.
 - Misquote ācārya's statements to establish own narratives that the sacred thread was a recent introduction into human society.
 - The author(s) cheat the readers by removing several parts of Śrīla Prabhupāda's conversation to support their misinterpretations regarding Jāhnavā-devī:
 - The author(s) hide evidences against FDGs. This book is a textbook example of every possible distortion and chicanery used to achieve a political end.
 - The author(s) produce untraceable correspondences from Śrīla Prabhupāda to a female disciple, to falsely establish that he favored women to live alone.
 - The author(s) misquote Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter to Hamsaduta, 19 October 1974, out of context, to stitch a narrative that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not think the varṇāśrama system is necessary for ISKCON.
 - On page 31 of the book, the author(s) boldly claim that what Śrīla Prabhupāda and his guru mahārāja said and did in regards to FDG implementation is irrelevant.
 - On pages 88-90, the author(s) criticize Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's and Śrīla

Prabhupāda’s teachings, even imply that those teachings as absurd.

- The book dedicates 50 pages, starting at page 243, to portraying traditional Vedic culture as being horrendous, and that by tying together “fragments” of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements from his lectures and conversations they build a deceptive narrative that Śrīla Prabhupāda was indeed favouring the western egalitarian and feminist agenda.
 - The author(s) misrepresent the words of scholars of other sampradāyas: Falsely claim that M.A. Lakshmi Thathacharya of Śrī-sampradāya stated that there were FDGs in their lineage.
 - The author(s) twist an otherwise clear statement from chapter 8 of Nectar of Devotion (NOD) to establish that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Books are not always the final authority.
4. Faulty and dangerous Hermeneutics:
- The author(s) propose “*śāstra-viruddha* narrative” (a narrative against scriptures) that women *dīkṣā-gurus* can get protection from their disciples in same way a mother is protected by her sons.
 - The author(s) propose a dangerous trial and error method of allowing FDGs and to recall FDGs upon failures.
 - The author(s) twist “Ganapati worship” statement of chapter 8, NOD to conclude that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are confusing.
 - The author(s) blaspheme Śrīla Prabhupāda’s SB 4.12.32 purport as artificial and as highly over-rated.
5. The author(s) blatantly ignore Śrīla Prabhupāda’s and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s criticism of Caste Goswāmīs, only to legitimize *apa-sampradāyas* and *ṛtvikism*.
6. The author(s) twist Lord Rṣabhadeva’s and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements only to proclaim themselves as the champions of *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

7. The author(s) suggest: ISKCON should not implement *varṇāśrama* but instead should implement women *dīkṣā-gurus*, ISKCON should give independence to women and fully support their “independence and preaching aptitude” not caring for scriptural regulations, they declare that a woman can be independent in her old age, totally going against the statements of *guru-sādhu-śāstras*.
8. The author(s) throughly word juggle to state: In Lord Kṛṣṇa’s Vedic culture, *varṇāśrama* system is a phantasmagoria.

Short synopsis

On page 1 of their book, the author(s), set the foundation with a rhetorical question as to whether Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted women *dīkṣā-gurus*. A thorough study of the contents of this book reveals that the author(s) are convinced that accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda's informal and spoken instructions in his letters and conversations regarding the women *dīkṣā-gurus* is as peaceful as it is at the "eye of the storm," and all other statements in numerous purports and lectures concerning this topic are stormy winds that create mere disturbances. Thus, by whimsically creating a hierarchy among Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and by divorcing his teachings from *śāstras*, the entire book is based on sentimental prejudice or *apa-siddhānta* (wrong philosophical conclusions).

There is no Vedic tradition of women becoming *ācāryas*. The author(s) of the book in question while arguing against this point and commit serious word jugglery and severe offenses.² The analysis of their de-constructionalising of the SB 4.12.32 purport, unveils their imposition of *apa-siddhānta* on Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement. Presenting wild guesses through gross misrepresentations of our *sampradāya-ācāryas* (false interpretations on sacred thread, false claims about female deities with sacred threads, false representation of women independence, etc.), the author(s)' experience, knowledge, and following of the Vedic traditions and the Vedic *saṁskāras* are conspicuous by their absence. Hence, by adopting or promoting these *apa-sampradāya* and *aśāstric* concepts that the author(s) put forward in their book, the GBC is alienating thousands of devotees all over the world.

2 *śruti-śāstra-nindanam* (blasphemy of scriptures) and *artha-vāдай* (giving mundane interpretations).

“Grain of rice test:” Faulty & dangerous Hermeneutics

It is enough to test one grain of rice to see if the whole pot of rice is cooked. Similarly it is enough to examine a few sections for gross mistakes and fallacy, to determine the quality of the book in contention. Therefore, this section analyses some topics (from the book in question), for credibility factors such as accuracy, subject matter expertise, integrity, and depth of research.

In this refutation to the book in question, we establish that instead of looking at this issue from the “eye of the storm,” if one looks at it with the eye of *śāstra*, one will find that all statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda (starting with his books), are well harmonized with each other and with *śāstra* as the center, just like the spokes of a wheel are firmly resting on its hub at the center. In fact, this is the way Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to approach all contentious issues including and not limited to women *dikṣā-gurus*. It is also the Vedic standard that devotees should follow the instructions specified by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport to *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 20.352, which is to keep *śāstra* as the center of all.

We must remember that Śrīla Prabhupāda kept *śāstra* as the center in all of his teachings, and hence his books and lectures are the primary sources. Hence, when there arise any apparent conflicts between teachings contained in his books (and lectures) with those that are contained in his letters and conversations, the former (Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports or lectures) should be accepted as the “final word.” Adopting this principle, this writing refutes the arguments found in the book sub-titled “Eye of the storm,” with the understanding that the statement from his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.12.32 with respect to woman *dikṣā-gurus* has the final say over and above all his statements related to this topic from other sources. Hence, implementing woman *dikṣā-gurus* is not per scriptural

injunctions, as will be proven with evidence in subsequent sections.

Notwithstanding that the author(s) of the book in question, adopt an opposite principle to that of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s stated principle. From the onset, the contents of the book are based on “selective” quotes of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words contained in his letters and conversations. Throughout the book, they give more importance to statements from his letters and conversations than to those contained in his books and lectures.³ Hence, they consider those “selective” quotes to be the final authority on the issue of woman *dīkṣā-gurus*. It will be established in the latter sections of this presentation that such an improper *siddhānta* will only lead to nominal following of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Whereas, the book in question does not center its arguments with *śāstra-vākyas* as a pivot but instead interprets and interpolates statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda based on non-vedic methods of de-constructionalism, sentimental prejudice and/or *apa-siddhānta*. Thus, it contains textbook examples of every possible distortion and chicanery used to achieve a political end. Throughout this voluminous (292 pages) and un-conventionally structured book, the author(s) create “islands” of misconceived principles (*apa-siddhānta* or straw-man arguments) and cleverly misappropriate them to their opposition. Hence creating, misappropriating, and refuting their own straw-man arguments is a favorite theme throughout their publication. Due to such a disarrayed layout of the contents, our refutations, to the book in question, are arranged topic-wise, with reference to the page numbers where the topic being refuted is discussed. To ensure the focus of the readers on topics at hand and also to balance the brevity of presentation, we have chosen to refute only important topics from that book. Topics such as “*varṇāśrama*,” which by itself requires a dedicated presentation,

3 In the view of the pro-FDG camp, books and lectures are considered important if and only if they align with those “selective” statements (letters and conversations).

has been only dealt with briefly as part of this writing and will be dealt in more detail in subsequent writings.

How to messup *varṇāśrama-dharma*?

It is obviously clear that none among the author(s) are practicing *daivi-varṇāśrama*. On the contrary one of its main contributors or facilitators, Kaunteya Dās is known to have been persistent at presenting seminars deriding *daivi-varṇāśrama* for several years, the prominent being a seminar with the title, “How to mess up your life with *varṇāśrama-dharma*?”⁴ Upon receiving numerous complaints about that presentation, ISKCON India leaders investigated the case for hate speech, resulting in Kaunteya Dās writing another book under the series “Eye of the storm,” defending his position. In this section we will demonstrate that Kaunteya Dās through his personal example shows us a practical example of “how to mess up Lord Kṛṣṇa’s *varṇāśrama-dharma*.”

Cheating Lord Rṣabhadeva and Śrīla Prabhupāda simultaneously

As the old adage goes, “two mangoes with one stone,” it will be established in this section that the author(s) employ their own heretic system with which they cheat both the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His pure devotee, simultaneously. Starting at page 56 under the title, “women *dikṣā-gurus* are against *varṇāśrama*,” the author(s) dedicated 15 pages to refute *varṇāśrama* system. As we stated before, every major section of the author(s)’ work appears to be marred by distortion, chicanery, and outright cheating aimed at pushing their *apasiddhānta* agenda to the devotee community. Let us examine their statements made on page 68 under the heading, “Every Mother Should Deliver Her Dependents from Birth and Death.” Our examination of the section contents reveals the author(s) callousness towards dharma and justice (emphasis, underlines, and strikethrough are ours):

4 One of the seminar topics at the week-long conference – ILS 2020 – held at Māyāpur ISKCON campus.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.4.14 reveals that:

Lord R̥ṣabhadeva ... [**Therefore, He**] strictly followed the principles of varṇāśramadharma and acted accordingly. In due course of time, the principles of varṇāśrama-dharma had become neglected; therefore, through His personal characteristics and behavior, He taught the ignorant public how to perform duties within the varṇāśrama-dharma.

Part of His mission was to re-establish varṇāśrama by example, and **He specifically instructed humanity that the duty of the mother is non-different than the role of the guru**: To deliver one’s dependants from birth and death. Lord R̥ṣabhadeva said:

One who cannot deliver his dependents from the path of repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master, a father, a husband, a mother or a worshipable demigod. – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.18

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in the purport: “Everyone should be very responsible and take charge of his dependents just as a spiritual master takes charge of his disciple.” **There is therefore no incongruity for a woman to first play the role of a responsible mother and then accept spiritual children; both roles involve the duty of delivering her dependents. The two functions are equivalent: A woman should not become a mother if she can’t offer – by precept and example – the instruments of liberation; which, in substance, is the function of the dikṣā-guru. We must conclude that the alleged incompatibility of the roles is imaginary only.** – [p 68]

When we look at the actual translation of the SB 5.4.14, without the “magic ellipses” screen, it reveals that Lord R̥ṣabhadeva, although He Himself was the perfect Personality of Godhead, He acted as though He were an ordinary conditioned soul. The author(s) deliberately skipped the conjunction, “Therefore, He” as part of their “magic ellipses” trick mainly to aid their

speculative narrative: “Lord Ṛṣabhadeva’s mission was ... **He specifically instructed humanity that the duty of the mother is non-different than the role of the guru.**” As a matter of fact, in that verse and the entire chapter of the *Bhāgavatam* including all of the texts and purports, the words “mother” or “duty of the mother” are not even mentioned once. In the next chapter (chapter 5), there is no mention of overlapping roles of a mother and that of a spiritual master or *dikṣā-guru*. SB 5.5.18 mentions the spiritual master and mother separately but does not even remotely indicate that they have an overlapping role as the author(s) have imagined. Neither does Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to SB 5.5.18 state any such conclusions that the author(s) state in their book. Hence, the author(s) statement on page 68 of their book, **“There is therefore no incongruity for a woman to first play the role of a responsible mother and then accept spiritual children; both roles involve the duty of delivering her dependents”** is a clear display of serious deception intended to put their words into Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mouth. Let us examine a portion of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to verse SB 5.5.18 (emphasis ours):

The word *daivam* indicates a demigod or one who accepts worship from a dependent. Ordinarily, the spiritual master, husband, father, mother or superior relative accepts worship from an inferior relative but here Ṛṣabhadeva forbids this. **First the father, spiritual master or husband must be able to release the dependent from repeated birth and death.** If he cannot do this, he plunges himself into the ocean of reproachment for his unlawful activities. **Everyone should be very responsible and take charge of his dependents just as a spiritual master takes charge of his disciple or a father takes charge of his son.** All these responsibilities cannot be discharged honestly unless one can save the dependent from repeated birth and death. – [SB 5.5.18 purport]

In the above purport there is no mention of mother accepting spiritual children. Rather, Lord R̥ṣabhadeva and Śrīla Prabhupāda rejects this idea as clearly indicated by the lines in emphasis. Just for the sake of establishing their concocted ideas regarding the role of a mother as taking charge of her dependants, the author(s) resorted to nasty techniques of presenting a mutilated a sentence from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport. In other words, while referring to the SB 5.5.18 purport the author(s) quoted a sentence partially: “Everyone should be very responsible and take charge of his dependents just as a spiritual master takes charge of his disciple,” but knowingly removed the last part, **“or a father takes charge of his son.”** Then, the author(s) cleverly assigned the mutilated sentence to be the role of a mother, whereas in the actual purport Śrīla Prabhupāda says: **“First the father, spiritual master or husband must be able to release the dependent from repeated birth and death.”** So, the author(s) simply extracted the word mother from verse translation and tactfully inserted it into the purport to falsely state that mothers’ role is to take charge of their dependants and deliver them from the clutches of repeated birth and death.

Knowledge of Śāstras, Vedic culture, and tradition

Through the “grain of rice test” we will show numerous examples that expose several discrepancies in author(s) research on topics such as – the *upavīta* or sacred thread, the *pāñcarātra* system, the *dikṣā* system in different ages, ISKCON’s system of *dikṣā*, the relevance of caste goswāmīs to ISKCON, and the Vedic tradition and Vedic system of education.

Upavīta versus uttariya debacle

In a passage on page 233, the author(s) misinterpret Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s statements regarding

the *upavīta*⁵ (a sanskrit term for the sacred thread). First of all, the author(s) are mistaken that the *upavīta* interchangingly serves the purposes of *uttarīya*⁶ (a sanskrit term for the upper garment) and *yajñopavīta*⁷ (another sanskrit term referring to the sacred thread). When there is no *uttarīya* or upper garment, the *yajñopavīta* in the *upavīta* position substitutes for an *uttarīya*. For instance, in some ceremonies one is not able to have an *uttarīya*, in those cases the *upavīta* (*yajñopavīta*) also acts as *uttarīya*. Due to their poor understanding of the subject the author(s) jump to premature and humorous conclusions that the wearing of the sacred thread for men of higher *varṇas* (especially *brāhmaṇas*) was not a fixed fixture and that it was a recently introduced practice. The following is a snippet from that page:

While on a tour of South India in 1932, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura offered some background information on the sacred thread:

While visiting Madras, Śrīla Sarasvatī Thakura gave insights into his vast knowledge of sastra and Vedic culture by explaining to his disciples salient points about the dress of South Indian brāhmaṇas, who characteristically wore a vesti as lower cloth, and a cotton wrap across the shoulders or tied at the waist, with the rest of the chest and back bare except for an upavita.[28] He said that previously the upavita was not used, only the dhoti and upper cloth but later it became acceptable for brāhmaṇas to wear an upavita instead of an upper cloth. ... – [Bhakti Vikāsa Swami, “Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s South India Tour”]

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- 5 *Upavīta* – Refers to the sacred thread when worn on the left shoulder running across the chest and under the right arm. Also in this position it serves as *uttarīya* (upper cloth). One must ensure that the sacred thread is worn in this position irrespective of whether upper cloth is present or not.
- 6 *Uttarīya* – A cloth wrapped around the upper part of the body that runs across the chest, under the right arm and the other end of the cloth resting on the left shoulder, just like how the *Upavīta* is worn.
- 7 *Yajñopavīta* – *yajña-upavīta* or *yajña-sūtram*, which translates to “sacred thread.”

[28] So, wearing the sacred thread had not been a fixed fixture in the brāhmaṇas’ attire throughout the ages; “the upavita was not used.” In this connection, the *Smṛti Candrika* (a Sanskrit legal digest from the twelfth or thirteen century CE) quotes a passage attributed to sage Rṣyaśṛṅga, who performed a sacrifice on behalf of Mahārāja Daśaratha, the father of Lord Rāmacandra: “One may carry out all purposes for which yajñopavīta [sacred thread] is required by means of a garment and in its absence by a string of three threads.” – [p 233]

Before analyzing the author(s) statements on page 233, it is important to understand the fundamental concept behind the sacred thread. Some ceremonies and rituals, such as *antyēṣṭi* (final rites), are required to be performed in *eka-vastra* (Sanskrit term for single cloth).⁸ During such rituals the sacred thread will be switched back and forth between *upavīta* and *prācina-vīta*.⁹ Since, offerings to the *pitṛis* (sanskrit term for forefathers) should be done with lone lower cloth and offerings to devas should be done with both upper and lower cloths; instead of tying and untying the *uttarīya* (upper cloth) so many times during the ceremony; the sacred thread is switched between *upavīta* and *prācina-vīta* positions. As mentioned before *upavīta* serves the dual purpose of *uttarīya* and *yajñopavīta*, although the performer is wearing only one lower cloth.

Hence, without knowing these details, the author(s) misread Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s statements, and jump to conclude that the sacred thread was “**throughout the ages not a permanent** feature of the **brāhmaṇas’ attire**.” By selectively quoting *Smṛti-candrikā* sans its context, the author(s) expose their credulity and a lack of credibility in regards to their research capabilities and knowledge of the topic. They failed to realize that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s statement

8 *Antyēṣṭi* – final rites rituals for the departed (*pitṛis* or *bhandus*) while draped in a single cloth.

9 *prācina-vīta* – Sacred thread worn on right shoulder running across the chest and under the left arm for offerings to *pitṛis* or forefathers.

in regards to the sacred thread when harmonized with prior and subsequent verses of *Smṛti-candrikā* reveals the complete understanding of the topic.

Let us consider the verdict from *Smṛti-candrikā*, *Samśkāra-kāṇḍaḥ*, p.82, 83, which quotes a śloka from *Parāśkara Grihya-sūtra* (2.2.10) to establish that the sacred thread is not a recent or temporary feature but it is as old as the creation, as cited below:

*yajñopavītam paramam pavitram prajāpater-yatsahajam purastāt
āyusyamagrayam pratimuñca śubhram yajñopavītam balamastu tejah:*

The *yajñopavītam* (sacred thread) is the best among those that purify; the one that has emerged along with Brahmā (Prajāpati) at the time of creation; that which bestows life (longevity) and prominence; the one that is sacred and most auspicious; and the one which bestows on to the wearer both spiritual knowledge and power. [*Parāśkara Grihya-sūtra* 2.2.10]

In the same scripture, *Smṛti-candrikā*, *Samśkāra-kāṇḍaḥ*, p.83, it is also stated that those who do not know about the eternal nature of the sacred thread do not get any benefit of chanting or visiting holy places, or even the benefits of charity. Moreover, a *brāhmaṇa* who does not know about the *yajñna-sūtra* will always be bewildered like animals in all their activities of dharma.

*ya etam na vijānāti yajñna-sūtra-samudbhavam vedoktam niṣphalam
tasya snāna-dāna-japādikam brāhmaṇo yo na jānāti upavītasya
samsthitim mohātma saḥate bhāram paśur-gauriva sarvadā.*

Those who do not know how the *yajñna-sūtra* came in to being (as described above) will not get the fruits from his chanting of the vedas, nor the bathing in holy places nor the charity he gives or even the chanting of the mantras.

Another quote from page 83 of *Smṛti-candrikā*, *Samśkāra-kāṇḍaḥ*, states that in all circumstances a twice-born must adorn the sacred thread, cited as below:

*kārpāsa-kṣauma-govāla-śaṇa-valka-trṇodbhavam sadā sambhavatā
kāryamupavītam dvijātibhiḥ*

A twice born should **always wear** *upavīta* made of Cotton, fine linen, Govala-flex, valkala (tree bark), and Tṛṇa (dry grass).

What is noticeable in this is that so many alternatives are given to ensure that a twice born is never without *upavīta*. Notwithstanding these statements from *Smṛti-candrikā*, the author(s) prematurely state that the *upavīta* was not a fixed part of Vedic culture. Such repeated utterings of uninformed statements only show the poorly researched nature of the author(s) viewpoint, which will only confuse the readers of their book.

Let us continue with their viewpoint from a passage from page 241 of the book in contention:

We don’t suggest women **start (or re-start)** wearing the sacred thread. The Founder-Ācārya didn’t think it was needed; why should we disagree? His instructions to women to excellently perform domestic duties (in their grhastha days) and to vigorously preach (throughout their lives) – while, all-along, regularly chanting the Holy Name and studying the scriptures – are incalculably more important than a few strands of cotton, especially as **“wearing or holding the upavīta thread is not integral to chanting Gāyatrī mantras.** In any case, Śrīla Prabhupāda never said that wearing the sacred thread was an indispensable prerequisite to become dīkṣā-guru.

On pages 241-242, the author(s) stated, “we do not suggest women to start (or re-start) wearing the sacred thread,” only to expose their naiveté about sacred thread for women. Over and above, they dedicated several pages to develop a misconception sans scriptural evidence that women wore sacred thread in the past but discontinued that practice later on, which further demonstrates their callowness of the topic. In addition to this, the author(s) once again make statements that are against scriptural injunctions and codes by saying, **“wearing or holding the upavīta thread is not integral to chanting Gāyatrī mantras.”** This verse from page 84 of *Smṛti-candrikā*,

Samśkāra-kāṇḍaḥ, as cited below, directly contradicts their point.

*mantra-pūtaṁ sthitaṁ kāye yasya yajñopavītakam nottārayettataḥ
praṇo ydicchechreya ātmanaḥ kāyasthameva tat-kāryamutthāpyam
na kadācana sakṛd-uttāraṇā-tasya prāyāścitti bhavet dvijaḥ*
One who has been duly initiated by the Gāyatrī mantra and
have yajñopavītam, should never take it out (un-wear it) if he is
intelligent and desires his ultimate benefit (śreya). If he takes out
his upavīta even once then he, the dvija, becomes a subject of
penance (meaning sinful).

Another question is that if the sacred thread was not so important then why would Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda give the sacred thread to male devotees along with **Gāyatrī** mantra? Also why did Śrīla Prabhupāda want male devotees, after **putting on the sacred thread, to hear from a recording, his chanting the Gayatri Mantra**, if the sacred thread was not so important?

...Enclosed please find a sacred thread duly chanted on for Aravinda Dasa. After putting on the sacred thread he may be allowed to hear from the tape the Gayatri Mantra in the right ear. Since there is no sacred thread for the women, they may have already heard the mantra. In any case there are enclosed three mantra sheets, one for each of them. Now teach them to be good brāhmaṇas by keeping clean internally by always chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and externally by always bathing.

– Śrīla Prabhupāda’s letter to Kuladri, 77-04-28, New Vrindaban

Moreover, the sacred thread is worn after a ceremony called “*upanayanam*,” meaning bringing the disciple near the guru who presents the disciple to “*Savitāḥ*” or the Sun-God to bestow spiritual knowledge and power on him. After this, the guru recites the mantra into the ears of the disciple, as substantiated by this verse from *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.27) as cited below:

<i>atha veṇu-ninādasya</i>	<i>trayī-mūrti-mayī gatiḥ</i>
<i>sphuranti praviveśāśu</i>	<i>mukhābjāni svayambhuvaḥ</i>
<i>gāyatrīm gāyatas tasmād</i>	<i>adhigatya sarojajaḥ</i>
<i>saṁskṛtaś cādi-guruṇā</i>	<i>dvijatām agamat tataḥ</i>

Then Gāyatrī, mother of the Vedas, being made manifest, i.e. imparted, by the divine sound of the flute of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, entered into the lotus mouth of Brahmā, born from himself, through his eight ear-holes. The lotus-born Brahmā having received the Gāyatrī, sprung from the flute-song of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, attained the status of the twice-born, having been initiated by the supreme primal preceptor, Godhead Himself.

As shown above with scriptural evidence, the sacred thread needs to be worn throughout the life. One cannot remove the *yajñopavītam*, nor can one give up at any point of time the vow of chanting the mantras given at the time of “*upanayanam*.” The sacred thread cannot be removed at any time even during the acts of attending to sensual needs such as passing water or stool, or sexual intercourse. During these times the *yajñopavītam* must be worn as *nivīta*,¹⁰ and the brahma-knot pulled up and wrapped around the right ear. If the sacred thread is contaminated or past one year or while beginning a new Vedic ritual, then it has to be swapped out with a new one, and after chanting the *Brahmā-Gāyatrī* on the newly worn set along with the old set, the old sacred thread has to be properly disposed.

According to the dharma of a woman, she cannot, by herself alone, perform any of the *yajñas*, (not to mention bare chested), due to no upper cloth. Hence her husband wears another set of *yajñopavīta* and also ties around his hip a *mauñja* straw belt received from her hand, to perform the rituals on her behalf. Moreover, during her menstrual periods she cannot take part in *yajñas*, and so cannot wear the *yajñopavīta* lifelong without interruption; hence she relies on her husband to perform the *yajñas* on her behalf, thereby enabling her to perfectly perform *strī-dharma*. For these reasons women are not offered the *yajñopavīta*.

Nevertheless, the author(s) audaciously state that “**throughout the ages**” the *yajñopavītam* was not a permanent attire of

10 *Nivīta* – Sacred thread worn hanging from the neck like a garland. All offerings meant for sages must be done with sacred thread worn in this fashion.

the *brāhmaṇas*.¹¹ However, at least 5000 years ago *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.45.26) states that Vasudeva, the son of Śūrasena, arranged for a priest and other *brāhmaṇas* to perform his two sons' second-birth initiation (*yathāvad dvija-saṁskṛtim*). Śrīla Prabhupāda states in his, "Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead," chapter 45 as below:

Then Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa were duly initiated with the sacred thread ceremony, and They repeated the chanting of the Gāyatrī mantra. The **Gāyatrī mantra is offered to disciples after the sacred thread ceremony**, and Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa properly discharged the duties of chanting this mantra.

We also find from the *Rāmāyana* that in Treta-yuga Lord Rāmā and His brothers received *dvija-saṁskṛtim* as well. In Satya-yuga, many sages lived in the forests and performed sacrifices, and there is documented evidence of them chanting mantras after receiving sacred threads. So, what can be said about the author(s) coming to the conclusion that the sacred thread was not a part of **brāhmaṇas' fixed attire?**

They further state that Śrīla Prabhupāda never said that wearing the sacred thread was an indispensable prerequisite to become a *dikṣā-guru*. However, in his purport to Cc *Madhya* 15.108, Śrīla Prabhupāda states just the opposite:

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains *dikṣā* in his *Bhakti-sandarbha* (283):
divyaṁ jñānaṁ yato dadyāt kuryāt pāpasya saṅkṣayam
tasmāt dikṣeti sā proktā deśikais tattva-kovidaiḥ

"*Dikṣā* is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity. A person expert in the study of the revealed scriptures knows this process as *dikṣā*." The regulative principles of *dikṣā* are explained in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (2.3-4) and the *Bhakti-sandarbha* (283). As stated:

11 Although, in their book the author(s) did mention *brāhmaṇas* but it should be understood that the *yajñopavītam* was worn by men of the three higher *varṇas*.

*dvijānām anupetānām svakarmādhyayanādīṣu
yathādhikāro nāstīha syāc copanayanād anu
tathātrādīkṣitānām tu mantra-devārcanādīṣu
nādhikāro 'sty atah kuryād ātmānam śiva-saṁstutam*

“Even though born in a brāhmaṇa family, **one cannot engage in Vedic rituals without being initiated and having a sacred thread.** Although born in a brāhmaṇa family, one becomes a brāhmaṇa only after initiation and the sacred thread ceremony. **Unless one is initiated as a brāhmaṇa, one cannot worship the Holy Name properly.**”

According to the Vaiṣṇava regulative principles, one must be initiated as a *brāhmaṇa*. The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (2.6) quotes the following injunction from the *Viṣṇu-yāmala*:

*adīkṣitasya vāmoru kṛtaṁ sarvaṁ nirarthakam
paśu-yonim avāpnoti dīkṣā-virahito janaḥ*

“‘Unless one is initiated by a bonafide spiritual master, all his devotional activities are useless. A person who is not properly initiated can descend again into the animal species.’”

*ato guruṁ praṇamyaivaṁ sarva-svaṁ vinivedya ca
grhṇīyād vaiṣṇavaṁ mantraṁ dīkṣā-pūrvam vidhānataḥ*

“‘It is the duty of every human being to surrender to a bonafide spiritual master. Giving him everything — body, mind and intelligence — one must take Vaiṣṇava initiation from him.’” – [cited in Cc *Madhya* 15.108 purport]

From the above-cited purport, is it not clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda states that without receiving **dīkṣā** and **the sacred thread**, one cannot worship the Holy Name properly? Without receiving such a **dīkṣā** and the sacred thread how can one become a guru to give **dīkṣā**? Then on what basis do the author(s) state that “**Śrīla Prabhupāda never said that wearing the sacred thread was an indispensable prerequisite to become a dīkṣā-guru?**” Is this not misrepresenting Śrīla Prabhupāda? Moreover, as already cited from *Smṛti-candrikā*, *Samskāra-kāṇḍaḥ*, p 84, the verse starting with *mantra-pūtaṁ sthitaṁ kāye yasya yajñopavītakam* states that if one removes his *upavīta* even once then he, the *dvija*,

becomes a subject of penance (meaning sinful). Hence *śāstra* and Śrīla Prabhupāda state that even for receiving *dikṣā*, wearing the sacred thread is certainly an “indispensable prerequisite,” contrary to the claim of the author(s), in their book on page 242. In this regard we should note that we have used the same scripture *Smṛti-candrikā*, which the author(s) quoted in their text. Nevertheless, there are also many scriptures that prove the above fact and expose the erroneous ideas of the author(s). Hence, for a disciple to receive a *vaidika* mantra such as *brahma-gāyatrī* or *sāvitrī* from a guru, the disciple has to be adorned with sacred thread. Women cannot receive a *vaidika* mantra and hence there is no sacred thread for them. From scriptural injunctions it is understood that the *dikṣā-guru* should have received the mantra and sacred thread together from his *dikṣā-guru* in a proper way in order from him to give this mantra to his disciple. So, does it make sense that the author(s) say that Śrīla Prabhupāda never said the sacred thread is an indispensable prerequisite to become *dikṣā-guru*?

To conclude this section, we can see that the book in contention is full of gross violations of all norms of scholarly writing, full of offenses to the Vedic scriptures, the saintly persons, and the *guru-paramparā* (*śruti-śāstra-sādhu-guru-nindanam*). With a seemingly shallow understanding of Vedic culture, their proposal for ISKCON to implement FDG, with no basis of guru, *sādhu*, and *śāstras*, advocates not only risking ISKCON’s reputation of pure, esteemed, and highly respectable proponent of Vedic culture but also to glide down the slippery slope to become a heretic cult. On page 24 of their book, the author(s) give a list of persons who they claim have endorsed their book. In light of the serious discrepancies found in the book in question, these individuals may want to rescind their endorsements.

The Governing Body Commission (GBC) of ISKCON has formally and repeatedly recognized the principle that “a mature,

qualified, female devotee may accept the role of an initiating spiritual master.” (Resolution 425, 2005 and resolution 305, 2009) Notwithstanding, certain ISKCON devotees have been promoting a rethink of that conclusion. The dialogue that ensued has inspired various disciples and grand-disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda to research and reflect upon the subject. This group – which included representatives from all orders of life (brahmācārī, gr̥hastha, vānaprastha and sannyāsī) and also initiating spiritual masters – concluded that the decision of the GBC is perfectly in line with the teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. This writing conveys their considerations and their conclusions. [p 24]

The Yajñopavīta or sacred thread for Female Deities – refuted

On pages 237 – 239, the author(s) present iconographic evidence of sculptures of goddesses (Pārvatī) with, what appears to be a *yajñopavīta*. Based on this they state that examples from the heavenly realm serve as precedence for our earthly region. If worldly women can adorn themselves with the sacred thread citing heavenly personalities, would it mean they can imitate heavenly persona to roam about bare-breasted as well? From various descriptions of the lifestyle of heavenly personalities, especially from the very ancient sculptures, we find that the social norms for heavenly female personalities, in regards to dressing, are very different from that of the earthly women. Obviously, what we see is not what it is, especially when there is no documented evidence of the practice of women wearing the sacred thread mentioned in the great history of Vedic culture. With a bit of initial research going through *Mānasāra*, a renowned text on *śilpa-śāstra*,¹² we find in details of the chapter “*śakti-lakṣaṇam*” (“chapter 54 – Female Deities”), that there is no mention of a *yajñopavīta* or *yajña-sūtram* for any female deities including mother Pārvatī. However, when we search in chapter 50 of that scripture that explains the rules for creating

12 The scripture prescribes the rule and regulations about sculptures and their form.

images of male gods and kings, we find the following verses mentioning the *yajñopavīta* or *yajña-sūtram*.

*bāhuvalayadāmam ca skandho mālāvalambanam
prakoṣṭhe valayam caiva maṇibandhakalāpakam* (8)

The arms are decorated with armlets and other hanging ornaments; the forearms are decorated with bracelets and the wrists are decorated with kalāpa ornament.

*yajñasūtrādipāśvaika sūtram syāttu stanāvṛtam
purasūtralambanam pūrve yajñasūtram tu bandanam* (10)

The verse starting with “*yajna-sutrādi*” actually includes all *vaikakṣika*¹³ ornaments - *vaikakṣika-sūtram*, all of which hang from one end and rest on the other side. *Stana-sūtram* is known as *stanāvīrudham*, which wraps around both the breasts and runs across the breasts. *Pura-sūtram* is called *lambanam* or hanging down the neck. Because it is mentioned as *yajñasūtram tu bandanam*, it refers to that thread which is tied as a belt across the body. [Mānasāra 50.10]

According to the translations and commentaries from, “Mānasāra - part 2” by N. V. Venkatasubramaniya Shastri,¹⁴ we find that it is probable that what appears to be a sacred thread on those iconographs may be other ornaments such as a *vaikakṣika* that is worn in a fashion similar to a sacred thread. This book is now out of print. Certainly, this topic is being researched in detail and if readers are curious about this, they are requested to contact us for getting copies taken from that book. Nonetheless, in this section, we have established that what the author(s) of the pro FDG book under scrutiny state as iconographic evidence is incomplete and dubious.

13 *Vaikakṣika* – A stringed ornament worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm like the *yajñopavīta*. *vaikakṣiki kṛtoddāmaphalakodyotitāmbaram* - Śiva B.29.22.

14 A traditional *śilpa śāstra* Paṇḍit living the culture and involved in sculpting deities, Sarasvatī Mahal. A book published in Tamil with Mānasāra verses in *grantha-lipi* (*grantha* is an ancient script used for the Tamil language just like *devanāgarī* script used for sānskrit)

The “Pārvatī yajñopavīta debacle” – Atheism exposed

From page 236 onwards, the author(s) quote secular university scholars, to establish that women wore sacred threads in the past, the evidence for which can be seen in many idols of goddesses (which has been proven wrong). In this regard, the photograph which they used for their study, – of bronze statue from Tamilnadu shown in their book – is that of Mother Pārvatī. One may wonder what are they trying to communicate? First of all, on page 233, they argue that the sacred thread was not a (fixed) part of ancient Indian culture/brāhminical attire. Then 3 pages later they show pictures of idol of Mother Pārvatī wearing the sacred thread. Does that not mean that the author(s) imply that Mother Pārvatī is of recent origin, which correlates with the modern secular or **atheistic conclusion**, as will be explained in the following paragraphs? Or is it that knowingly or unknowingly the methods of analysis and materialistic ideas that the author(s) chose to employ ultimately led them to atheism?

One reason for their predicament is due to their resorting to these secular scholar’s analysis of Kṛṣṇa’s Vedic culture out of desperation to establish FDGs.¹⁵ Instead of trying to understand these topics from Vedic scholars who live in that culture,¹⁶ they blindly subscribe to secular scholars’ ideas and thus land themselves in a precarious situation. But the author(s) of the pro-FDG book chose to cite the liberal, “Gender Forum, an Internet Journal for Gender Studies,” about the Pārvatī idol.

Let us consider the secular scholar’s narrative – Secular scholars believe that there is no such thing as ‘Pārvatī’ or ‘Śiva.’ They argue:

15 The author(s) cite Dr. Bir Pal Singh, National Law Institute University, Bhopal, India (p.236) Sreenivasa Rao as their authority. whose conclusions directly contradict Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements that ancient Indian Vedic women were not entitled to study Vedas nor contribute in the intellectual and academic field.

16 The book by N. V. Venkatasubramaniya Shastri, contains *pramāṇas* based on Mānasāra, the authoritative book on the Vedic deity sculpture.

These are just fictitious characters, imagined by people living in the Indian sub-continent to be gods, for at least the past 4,000 years passed down in generations through culture and depicted in idol forms, paintings, etc. according to the cultural norms prevalent at a given time in the society. The deity of Pārvatī Devī was produced during the Chola dynasty, therefore women must have worn the sacred thread at that time in south India. Idols of Pārvatī carved at some other place or at some other time may not have a sacred thread because their then culture did not allow women to wear a sacred thread. As gods do not actually exist, and are a figment of man's imagination, man tends to imagine his gods as being of a similar cultural disposition and adorned with similar cultural attire as himself.¹⁷ Thus by seeing gods' idols one can get an idea of the culture of the people they were carved by. In reality, there is no such thing as god.

The problem is that these secular scholars do not believe in the eternal existence of the Vedas, and they believe that the Vedas are a creation of men in course of time, the oldest of the Vedic texts being created about 4000 years back. They also do not believe that the information in the Vedas is beyond the four defects and that it does not need to be updated. These are the stereotypical ideas of an atheist. "Beware of it."

A typical feature of Buddhist philosophy is that they accept only Lord Buddha as their authority and do not recognize any authority above Him.¹⁸ We see that the supporters of FDG akin to *ṛtviks* within ISKCON who share a similar idea: both of them accept selective statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda while rejecting other statements that do not conform to their agenda. As it will be shown in latter sections, the pro-FDG even argue that Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements should not be harmonized with

17 This may remind us of HH Hridayananda Gosvāmī's Krishna West philosophy which holds that the way Kṛṣṇa is presented to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda is the Indian way and that Kṛṣṇa may be presented in the western way also. For instance, they believe that Kṛṣṇa did not necessarily wear a Dhoti.

18 *veda nā māniyā bauddha haya ta' nāstika* "The Buddhists do not recognize the authority of the Vedas; therefore they are considered agnostics." (Cc. 2.6.168)

śāstras; an action that Śrīla Prabhupāda never endorsed. When Purusottama left because Śrīla Prabhupāda persistently rejected the Moon Expedition as a farce, Śrīla Prabhupāda commented, “Purusottama may dis-believe Prabhupāda but how could he dis-believe *śāstra*?”

The methodology of secular scholars to deride Vedic culture is to make exceptions as the rule. For instance, they quote Gargi and Maitreyi, two exceptional women of Vedic times who had undergone *upanayana* ceremony to study Vedas, as evidence and generalize that getting *upanayana* and studying Vedas was open to all women of the Vedic times. The author(s) of the book in contention, have also used the same methodology in several places, as is evident in the example of the Pārvatī idol.¹⁹

Hence the methodology of using exceptions to represent the norm or to misunderstand exceptions to be the norm is certainly a fault. Vedic cultural norms are mentioned in and derived from the *dharma-śāstras* and tradition. One can repeatedly see this technique of taking the exceptions to be the norms is being used by the proponents of Krishna West philosophy (like HH Hridayananda Gosvāmī), and now by the pro-FDG camp. We hope that the readers will be benefited from knowing the method by which to distinguish exceptions from the norms of Vedic culture. The proper method to know anything about Vedic culture is to approach those who are living the Vedic culture and believe in its eternality and who has unflinching faith in the *śāstras* and gurus. This faulty method exegesis is just the tip of the iceberg of such faults presented in the book in question.

Are Divine Goddesses and Earthly Women equals?

In this section, we will refute the claims on pages 79 through 85 of the book in question – a segment which the author(s) title: “Initiating Goddesses – Examples of Superhuman Feminine *Dikṣā-Gurus*.” In this section of their book the author(s) attempt

19 Example 2: Jāhnava mātā and Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāmīni, exceptions of FDG in Gauḍiya line, as evidence to instituting FDGs in ISKCON.

to establish their theory that the rules of the heavenly realms are applicable to the human realms and vice versa.

“The Sarasvatī debacle” exposed

On pages 79-81 of the book in question, the author(s) make yet another unsuccessful attempt to establish a non-existent lineage of female *dikṣā-gurus* by even quoting Goddesses from higher planetary systems or the spiritual world as their ultimate evidence or *śabda-pramāṇa*.

In their book the author(s) promote a false argument that statements contained in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, being “descriptive statements,” are less important for ISKCON devotees compared to his statements contained in his letters which are “prescriptive.” It is certainly surprising that when convenient the author(s) resort to using Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books as their primary source of evidence as can be seen on page 79 of their book. Quoting from *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.23-24) and *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 5.221, purport), the author(s)’ narrative is that FDG is also popular among the *devas* and that Lord Brahmā’s guru is a female since he got his mantra from goddess of learning Sarasvatī, as cited below (emphasis ours):

Being initiated by women is neither new nor confined to interactions between humans. Even Lord Brahmā, the head of our sampradāya, at one point was initiated by a “woman,” a divine feminine personality. As he described in his *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.23-24), it happened when Brahmā, coming out of the lotus springing from the navel of Lord Viṣṇu, “could see nothing but darkness in every direction.”

Then the goddess of learning Sarasvatī, the divine consort of the Supreme Lord, said thus to Brahmā who saw nothing but gloom in all directions, “O Brahmā, this mantra, viz., *klīm kṛṣṇāya govindāya gopī-jana-vallabhāya svāhā*, will assuredly fulfill your heart’s desire.” – [p 79]

The statement, starting with **“Being initiated by women is neither new nor confined to interactions between humans,”** shows the author(s)’ naiveté of the Vedic philosophy and Vedic culture. To accept their logic that “initiating women gurus” are not only common among humans but is also observed even in Brahmā-lokā is as absurd as to say Mother Sarasvatī, the Goddess of learning and giver of the Vedas to learned men, is forbidden to utter the Vedas since women in the human realm are forbidden to utter Vedic mantras! Exploiting the words, **“Sarasvatī ... said thus to Brahmā ... this mantra, viz.,”** to their undue advantage the author(s), mislead the readers with their “narrative,” that **“Even Lord Brahmā, the head of our sampradāya, at one point was initiated by a “woman,”** a divine feminine personality.”

It is clear from this statement and many other statements in the Vedic literature that Mother Sarasvatī, the Divine consort of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world, is the Goddess of learning, and only by Her mercy can anyone including Lord Brahmā get the ability to learn. So, the question may arise as to who is the actual initiating spiritual master of Lord Brahmā. This question is actually answered in a subsequent verse of *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.27) wherein it is stated in the text that Lord Brahmā, actually received the *Kāma-gāyatrī* through the flute of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and was initiated by the Supreme Lord into the status of the twice-born, as cited below:

Then *Gāyatrī*, mother of the Vedas, being made manifest, i.e. imparted, by the divine sound of the flute of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, entered into the lotus mouth of Brahmā, born from himself, through his eight ear-holes. The lotus-born Brahmā having received the *Gāyatrī*, sprung from the flute-song of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, attained the status of the twice-born, having been initiated by the supreme primal preceptor, Godhead Himself. [BS 5.27 Text Translation]

Hence, from the verse (BS 5.27) – *sarojajaḥ saṁskṛtaś cādi-guruṇā dvijatām agamat tataḥ* – it is very clear that Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*ādi-guru*) initiated (*saṁskṛtaś*) Lord Brahmā (*sarojajaḥ*) and

made **Gāyatrī**, mother of the Vedas, another consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa, to manifest through the divine sound of His flute. When the four headed Lord Brahmā heard it **Gāyatrī** entered into Lord Brahmā's heart. The point is that Sarasvatī and Gāyatrī are divine energies of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is the original Guru and by His mercy these energies are imparted to everyone in a disciplic succession starting from Lord Brahmā. Hence Sarasvatī, mother of all learning **is not to be seen** on the human platform as a **female dikṣā-guru** and hence constitutes to the offence of giving mundane interpretations (*artha-vāda*). Moreover, unlike verse 5.27, *Brahma-saṁhitā* verse 5.24 does not explicitly state that Lord Brahmā was initiated by Sarasvatī. Actually, verse 5.24 merely states – *uvāca puratas tasmai tasya divyā sarasvatī* – that “Sarasvatī, the divine consort of the Supreme Lord, spoke to Lord Brahmā.”

On pages 80 and 81 of the book in contention, quoting from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.3.20-21, purport) and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Śrī Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta*, the author(s) claim that in the history of *vaiṣṇavism* and India in general, female personalities such as the Goddesses Lakṣmī or Kāmākhyā have been gurus or *sampradāya* heads, and hence female *dikṣā-gurus* have been initiating disciples since the beginning of the universe. Obviously, the opponents of FDG implementation in ISKCON are not saying that FDG's are completely taboo but as was explained in the introductory chapters of this writing there is no *śāstra-pramāṇa* that states that female gurus can be instituted as freely as male gurus but there is scriptural evidence to the contrary. What this means is that the *śāstras* certainly prohibit the full-fledged opening of the flood-gates regarding FDG's. Only in very rare or special cases can woman become a *dikṣā-guru*. On pages 32 and 33 of their book, the author(s) claim to have supportive evidence that some leading Śrī-vaiṣṇava scholars support FDG's, as shown below (emphasis added):

The absence of śāstric prohibitions against women *dīkṣā-gurus* is also recognized by respected exponents of other Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas There are no prohibitions in the scriptures or in the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda; only some degree of social (and psychological) resistance to the principle. Another scholar, Professor M.A. Lakshmi Thathachar, of the Academy of Sanskrit Research in Melkote, Karnataka, speaking on behalf of the Rāmānuja-sampradāya (Śrī Vaiṣṇavism), said the following:

[Interview by Sudhir Caitanya dāsa] Question: Is there any history of female *dīkṣā-guru* in your sampradāya? If so, where and why? If not, why not? **Answer:** Āṇḍāl, the celebrated wife of Kūreśa, was an ideal Śrī Vaiṣṇava woman, ācāryāṇī. She used to guide students on the spiritual path. Among the Śrī Vaiṣṇava saints, Āṇḍāl, the spiritual daughter of Periyālvār or Viṣṇucitta, ranks high. Her composition, Tiruppāvai, is considered to be the epitome of the entire Vedas. – [p 32,33]

There is reason to suspect the veracity of the above claim. The very same Śrī-vaiṣṇava scholar and professor, M.A. Lakshmi Thathachar, of the Academy of Sanskrit Research in Melkote, Karnataka has published a duly signed letter of protest against the GBC’s 2019 FDG resolution. In fact, before the passing of the Tirupati FDG resolution, these scholars, including Professor M.A. Lakshmi Thathachar, pleaded with the ISKCON GBC offices, to not go ahead with the FDG proposal via recorded personal interviews, which are published for public viewing on social media/the internet.²⁰

Once again, our evidence proves that these very learned scholars and devotees belonging to the *Śrī-sampradāya* totally reject the concept of **female *dīkṣā-gurus***. The fact that there has never been any precedence for FDG’s in their sampradāya, save and except Mother Lakṣmī (and Her expansions), is quite

20 Signed protest letters from leading scholars of *Śrī-sampradāya*: <https://tinyurl.com/4edrba73>

consistent with the understanding across the *Śrī-vaiṣṇava-sampradāya* circles on this topic of FDG.²¹

According to the *vaḍagalai* sect of that *sampradāya* Mother Lakṣmī is Prāṇeṣvari and can award liberation, whereas the *teṅgalai* sect consider her the *Prathama-ācārya* or the first *ācārya* coming after Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, Who alone can award liberation.²² Perhaps, had the author(s) been aware of the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verses (1.13 to 1.15 and 1.37 to 1.44) at the time of writing their book, they would have realized that the above three divine personalities (who are a **direct manifestation of the Lord's energies** and **not superhuman women of the material universe**) although being feminine are in fact the *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām* (seeing the Lord face to face) as specified in the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.44.

“Women gurus in guru-paramparā list” – refuted and exposed

In this section, we will refute the arguments presented in the section with the title “No Woman is Included in the Disciplic Succession Printed at the Beginning of the Bhagavad-gītā; Therefore, Women Should Not Become *dīkṣā-gurus*,” on page 134 of the book in question, through analysis from Vedic scriptures and bonafide *guru-paramaparā* authorities.

Doomed if they did; doomed if they didn't

Let us consider a passage from page 134 of the book in question (emphasis ours) wherein the author(s) dare, with an absurd arithmetic, to disprove the statements of the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verses and Śrīla Prabhupāda, that FDGs are a very special case and not so many:

21 Interviews with renowned Sanskrit scholar and descendant of Śrīman Nātha Muni, Śrīman Vasudevan Tāttacārya and descendant of Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa, Śrīman Murali Bhaṭṭar, chief priest of Śrī Raṅgam Raṅganānātha Swāmi main Temple - <https://tinyurl.com/yckc55dr>

22 Details about these differences in ideologies and practices is discussed in detail in one of the papers authored by this author located at: <https://tinyurl.com/3r7bxuxt>

In that list **there are also no Americans, Africans, Andorrans, Andalusians, Austrians or Australians**; should they also be banned from becoming *dīkṣā-guru*? First of all, **most of that list (twenty-eight out of thirty-two entries)** highlights **designated sampradāya links** within the last 800 years. The list doesn’t include all initiating spiritual masters in the *Brahmā-sampradāya* from the beginning of the universe, some hundred-fifty trillion years ago (150,000,000,000,000 years). **We can safely assume** that within that period there have been more women *dīkṣā-gurus* than the dozens mentioned in this writing, all of whom were from the last fivehundred years (or within 0.0000000003 percent of the total time); and that’s only in connection with our *Brahmā*. There are innumerable *Brahmās* in innumerable universes. **As a ballpark figure, a rough calculation, we estimate that there have been innumerable women dīkṣā-guru in the past and there shall be innumerable in the future. We hope ISKCON shall play its part by contributing a substantial number.** – [p134]

It appears that the author(s) are sold out to the misconception that there could be more female *dīkṣā-gurus* in our *Brahma-mādhva-gauḍīya-sampradāya* that we are not informed of;²³ thence, they stoop down to new “lows,” such as identifying transcendental personalities based on race and countries of birth, etc. which is akin to several offenses to Holy Name not limited to *guror-avajāña* (considering the spiritual master as an ordinary person), *artha-vāda* (giving mundane interpretations), etc.

The expose presented in the previous section titled, “The Sarasvatī debacle” shows, a) the author(s)’ deep ignorance and lack of depth in scholarly research; b) their misconstrued understanding of scriptures. The statement made by the author(s) on page 134 of their book starting with, **“As a ballpark figure, a rough calculation, we estimate ...”** is

23 Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana in *Prameya ratnāvalī*, 5-6, gives the *Brahma-mādhva-gauḍīya-sampradāya* disciplic succession (*śrī-kṛṣṇa-brahma-devaṛṣi-bādarāyaṇa-saṁjñakān*) and not a single female is listed as *sampradāya-guru*.

not only another example of mundane speculation but also is an exemplary offense no multiple accounts – *artha-vāda* and *guror-avajāna*. Hence, for that reason and for not basing their statements on *śāstra-sādhū-guru-vākyas*, the author(s) are doomed for being wrong.

Even, if the author(s), successfully prove (by hook or crook) that mother Sarasvatī was the “female *dikṣā-guru*,” of Lord Brahma, the result will be equal to the well-known adage, “operation success! patient dead,” because it would mean that Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana, our *sampradāya-ācārya* was wrong to not consider mother Sarasvatī as a “**designated sampradāya link**” in-between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Lord Brahmā in the chain of disciplic succession. On this occasion, the author(s) will be doomed for their apparent correctness.

The only option available for the author(s) and their followers is to withdraw this book with immediate effect and beg forgiveness from devotees; otherwise, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa forbid, they sure will land up in the serious trap of “Doomed if they did; Doomed if they don’t.” Evidence²⁴ from very learned scholars and devotees of *Brahma-Madhva-sampradāya* reject **female dikṣā-guru** in principle and practice. Moreover, these learned scholars state that there has never been any precedence for this in their *sampradāya* starting with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Lord Brahmā.

Ignorant of Pāñcarātra (vaiṣṇava-tantra) system

On pages 31 and 41, citing the injunction of *śāstra* regarding the prohibition of taking *sannyāsa* in Kali-yuga as an example, the author(s) attempt to establish that the idea of FDG is also complicated. Although their statement regarding *sannyāsa* in Kali-yuga may be correct, but using that as an analogy for FDG is completely wrong. We will now establish why it is so but before that let us consider their statements from those pages as shown below (emphasis ours and ellipses added to focus attention on the relevant portion):

²⁴ Interview with Śrīman AV Nagasampige, former Principal of Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha Sanskrit Patashala - <https://youtu.be/eHiMO7ocY9M>

This statement is found in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* (*Kṛṣṇa-janma-khaṇḍa* 185.180), and is quoted by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself in *Śrī Caitanyacaritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā* 17.164). Solely on the strength ... When facing apparent discrepancies or contradictions we need to reconcile them, acknowledging that what the ācārya says or does is the most authoritative evidence.

...

In regard to the issue of women *dīkṣā-gurus*, the above considerations are certainly valid but might ultimately be irrelevant: **So far, we have not seen even a single clear statement from any śāstra prohibiting women from initiating disciples.** Until its proponents provide śāstric evidence of the idea that “women *dīkṣā-gurus* are against *śāstra*,” we must conclude that the argument lacks validity. [page 31]

“There is no rule preventing ladies from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus* in the *Pāñcarātra* system” [Page 41]

Let us first focus on the statements in emphasis cited above from page 31 of the book in question. Although the author(s) are fully aware that Śrīla Prabhupāda never implemented the system of FDG within ISKCON, they falsely conclude that the absence of *śāstric* evidence prohibiting women from initiating disciples (a false premise), is sufficient for ISKCON to implement FDG bypassing the Founder-Ācārya’s actions. Are the author(s) not shooting themselves on their foot with such a claim, especially in the light of finding the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verses prohibiting women from becoming gurus? Even if one gives the benefit of the doubt to the author(s) that they did not know of the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verses (1.41 – 44) at the time of their writing, they are still guilty of pushing for institutionalizing FDGs against Śrīla Prabhupāda and his guru mahārāja who themselves did not implement the FDG system nor did they appoint any female devotee to any position of leadership.

Nonetheless, there is no disagreement with the statements made on pages 30 and 31 (masked by ellipses) in regards to *sannyāsa*

in Kali-yuga. We need to make a special note that there are scriptural injunctions that state that the *sannyāsa-āśrama* is an integral part of *varṇāśrama-dharma* as given to us by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself and that the practice of *karma-sannyāsa* is forbidden in Kali-yuga since as per scriptural injunctions in Kali-yuga one's longevity depends only on food and hence unlike in other yugas the maximum duration of penance or austerity prescribed for Kali-yuga is one day.²⁵ Moreover, in his purport to Cc. Ādi 17.164, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that the form of *sannyāsa* for the sake of rendering pure devotional service (*tri-danḍa sannyāsa*)²⁶ is not prohibited in Kali-yuga. However, the author(s) use this as an example to mislead the readers into believing that in the matter of FDG one simply has to follow the instructions of the Founder-Ācārya (at least only those that are favorable to their agenda). Another point is that unlike the apparently contradictory scriptural regulations concerning the *sannyāsa-āśrama*, with regards to FDG there are direct *śāstra-pramāṇa* from the *pāñcarātra-saṁhitās* forbidding women *dikṣā-gurus*, which the author(s) seems to be unaware of.

Yet, we see that the author(s) display their lack of *śāstric* knowledge and inexperience in Vedic tradition, while stating that neither the *śāstra* nor the *Nārada-pāñcarātra*, prevent ladies from becoming *dikṣā-gurus*. This demonstrates a fundamental faux-pas on the part of the author(s) in the form of undiligent research²⁷. We have already shown scriptural evidence from the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* prohibiting women who are not on the self-realized platform from becoming *mantra-gurus* or *dikṣā-gurus* (initiating spiritual masters). Nonetheless, we find that being ignorant of this fact, the author(s) claim to

25 'kalāv-annagataḥ prānaḥ'

26 *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* (2.36.9), glorifies the *sannyāsa-āśrama* in which a *sannyāsī* accepts merely a *danḍa*, water-pot, saffron-cloth, and never is stationed in one place.

27 The injunctions of the total gamut of *saṁhitās* on the *pāñcarātrika* initiation system specify the *adhikāras* for who can be an *ācārya*.

have testimonials from other *sampradāya* scholars regarding this topic, as below:

The absence of *śāstric* prohibitions against women *dīkṣā-gurus* is also recognized by respected exponents of other Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*. For instance, speaking on behalf of the Madhva-*sampradāya*, Sriman Ananta Krishna Acharya of the Palimar Maṭha in Uḍupī, had this to say: This last sentence accurately describes the present circumstances in ISKCON: **There are no prohibitions in the scriptures or the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda**; only some degree of social (and psychological) resistance to the principle. [page 32]

Notwithstanding the testimony of these scholars cited by the author(s) on page 32, one of the leading *Madhva-sampradāya* scholars, quoting *śāstras*, had a different opinion on this topic, an opinion aligned with the scriptural injunctions.²⁸ This topic has already been discussed in detail in the previous sections.

However, the verses from the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.42 – 44, cited before) directly contradicts the statements of the author(s) on page 32 that “**there are no prohibitions in the scriptures or the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda (prohibiting FDG)**.” These verses (1.42 – 44) indeed harmonize the scriptural evidence with all the statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda on this topic (purport to SB 4.12.32 and other statements from correspondences and room conversations).

Dīkṣā systems in satya-yuga vs. ISKCON’s dīkṣā system

The author(s) are misled to believe that during the era of Dhruva Mahārāja only the *vaidika* system of initiation existed and hence they believe that he received his *dīkṣā-mantra* in the *vaidika* system which is different from the *pāñcarātra* system that ISKCON follows. In this sub-section, we will demonstrate that because the author(s) are not privy to scriptural injunctions on this topic, they are deeply submerged in misconceptions. Let us first consider the *following* statements on page 40 of their book:

²⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/ms7y7btn>

All that we can **legitimately conclude** is that in Dhruva Mahārāja's time, a Satya-yuga in the Svāyambhuva Manu manvantara – approximately one billion nine hundred million years ago – women were restricted from giving initiation, at least among the members of the royal order or to their sons. That's all. How relevant is this information to the topic of ISKCON's women *dikṣā-gurus* today? **The methods of initiation then and now are quite different; at that time humanity was following the vaidika system**, in which women couldn't even take initiation, what to speak of giving initiation: – [p 40]

First of all, the word “**legitimately conclude**” begs the question of what criteria constitute anything as being legitimate. Accepting the direct meaning of the statements from the commentaries of *sādhus* and *gurus* that explain the constructs of *śāstra* and not mental concoctions constitutes legitimate conclusions.

Now let us consider the sentence on page 40 (in emphasis above): “methods of initiation ... quite different; ... women couldn't even take initiation, what to speak of giving initiation.” This is in essence what the author(s) consider the “eye of the storm.” Although the author(s) did not quote their source for this statement, we located the scriptural source for the predominant system of rituals in different yugas as quoted below:

tathā ca viṣṇu-yāmale
kr̥te śruty-ukta-mārgaḥ
syāt tretāyām smṛti-bhāvitāḥ
dvāpare tu purāṇoktaḥ
kalāv āgama-sambhavaḥ

It is stated in *Viṣṇu-yāmale* that the predominant ritual systems in various yugas are: *śruti* or *vaidika* for *satya-yuga*, *smṛti* for *treta-yuga*, *purāṇās* for *dvāpara-yuga*, and *āgma* or *tantra* for *kali-yuga*. [HBV 5.4]

However, even in the above verse, quoted from *Viṣṇu-yāmale* mentioned in *Hari Bhakti Vilāsa* (5.4), there is only a mention of

the predominant ritual systems for a particular yuga and there are no prohibitions on adopting methods of other yugas; say the *āgma* or *tantra* method of *kali-yuga* to be adopted in *satya-yuga*. Nonetheless, the author(s) stated, “in Dhruva Mahārāja’s time *vaidika* was the only system that the whole humanity followed for initiation,” without checking the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.8 verses and purports. In his purport to SB 4.8.52, Śrīla Prabhupāda clarifies that the method of devotional service that Dhruva Mahārāja was initiated into was the *pāñcarātra* system. Hence the author(s)’ conclusion about Dhruva Mahārāja’s initiation and the method of initiation in *satya-yuga* for the whole of humanity being exclusively “the *vaidika*” system is completely wrong.

Furthermore, in his *Digdarśini-ṭīkā* (DT) to *Hari Bhakti Vilāsa* (HBV), Sanātana Gosvāmī establishes that the *dvādaśākṣara* (12 syllable) mantra that Dhruva Mahārāja received from Nārada Muni (SB 4.8.54) was not from the *vaidika* system but instead was from the *pāñcarātra* system (*tatra śrī-vaiṣṇava-tantrēṣu madhye...* Dt-HBV 125-127). Furthermore, in the Dt-HBV verse 1.128, he once again references Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dīkṣā* episode as the example for getting *dvādaśākṣara* mantra in the *pāñcarātra* system. Hence, by declaring falsely, – the *pāñcarātra* system never existed during the time of Dhruva Mahārāja and that he received initiation via the *vaidika* system – the author(s) are guilty of creating a misleading narrative through a false premise.

The statements of the author(s), on page 41 of their book, as cited below, wherein they present their opinion of what they think Śrīla Prabhupāda intended as a *dīkṣā* system for ISKCON, yet again display their incorrect understandings:

The reference to Sunīti being ineligible to give initiation may offer a fascinating glimpse into a cultural norm of bygone ages but there is no indication that Śrīla Prabhupāda intended to transplant that custom in his International Society for Krishna

Consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda never extended the above detail beyond the particular circumstances of Sunīti and Dhruva. Śrīla Prabhupāda never turned this anecdote into a universal principle applicable to all women at all times. If the Founder-Ācārya didn't, why should we?" [Page 41]

It is a fact, apparently unknown to the author(s) that during the times of Sunīti the *pāñcarātra* system of initiation was very much in practice and that Dhruva Mahārāja himself was initiated into *pāñcarātra* mantra (SB 4.8.52 – 54), as explained before. Hence the objection that there is, **“no indication that Śrīla Prabhupāda intended to transplant that custom,”** and subsequent statements made by the author(s) are rendered null and void because the same *paramparā* of the *pāñcarātra* system of initiation coming from Nārada Muni, during the times of Sunīti and Dhruva Mahārāja, is still being carried on within ISKCON. In fact, by acceding to the author(s) proposed introduction of female *dikṣā-gurus* within ISKCON,²⁹ we will be introducing a custom that Śrīla Prabhupāda, by all indications, never intended to implement in ISKCON.

Credibility of research

Continuing with the grain of rice test, in this section we will establish with examples that throughout the book the author(s) have employed an array of citations and explanations that misquote, misinterpret, and ultimately mislead the readers with doubtful conclusions. In one of their statements on page 44, the author(s), deliberately devalue the purport of SB 4.12.32, by insisting that the overall message of Śrīla Prabhupāda in that purport regarding the topic at hand is ambiguous, whereas his words contained in his correspondences and conversations on the same topic are precise. To achieve this goal they use their favorite “magic ellipses” to hide that which does not fit their narrative. However, such tactics of presenting *guru-vākyas* or *sādhū-vākyas* without basis of *śāstra-vākyas*, thus creating room

29 For more details on up to date information, please refer to the “Breaking news” section at the beginning.

for own speculations, is a dangerous adventure on a slippery slope.

The “magic ellipses” – fabricated quote exposed

The ellipses are used to indicate that certain parts of a quote are left out for brevity and/or due to its low relevance to the discussion. Writers and editors have been using ellipses for ages. Nonetheless, the author(s) of the book in question are notorious for inventing a new use of “magical ellipses” that make inconvenient segments of quotes disappear into thin air. For example, in a passage on page 232 of the book in contention, the author(s) employ “magic ellipses” on one of the transcriptions of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s initiation lectures, to minimize the significance of the *yajñopavīta* as being merely superfluous.

The sacred thread **has more knots than meets the eye (pun intended)**. Anyway, as a starting point of our exploration, let’s understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the sacred threads only to his male disciples, as he explained during an initiation ceremony in 1968: “Some of the students, boys and girls, will be offered this Gāyatrī mantra. **And when the Gāyatrī mantra is offered men**, they are offered also sacred thread, and girls, they are not **offered sacred thread ... So don’t be sorry** because you will not be offered the sacred thread. That’s all right.” [p 232]

The author(s) start with a pun, which knowingly or unknowingly, expose their poor fund of knowledge on this topic. Furthermore, they venture into using deceitful tricks by altering Śrīla Prabhupāda’s quote to their undue advantage. Such editorial gymnastics are seen throughout their book and the instance shown here is analogous to testing one grain of rice in order to tell if the whole pot of rice is done. In the above passage, we find that the author(s) use ellipses (“**sacred thread, ... So don’t be sorry,**”) to not only distort the meaning of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words with regards to not offering the sacred thread to a woman, but they also use it to relate a false narrative that the sacred thread is for mere emotional consolation. Now,

what Śrīla Prabhupāda said in those “...” is as shown below (emphasis added):

And when the Gāyatrī mantra is offered to men, they are offered also sacred thread, and girls, are not offered sacred thread. If their husband is a brāhmaṇa, she automatically becomes brāhmaṇa because the wife is considered to be the half, better half. She is the better portion. So she automatically becomes a better brāhmaṇa. [laughter] So better brāhmaṇa does not require any thread. There is a Bengali proverb, *ya va nauket poiyeete darkana naya*[?]. The proverb is that in India if one has got the sacred thread, he is immediately understood that he must be belonging to the higher caste, brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiṣya. But if somebody knows that he is brāhmaṇa or kṣatriya, he doesn't require to show the sacred thread. Similarly, the wives of brāhmaṇa are already known that he [she] is brāhmaṇi, so she does not require to show the sacred thread. So don't be sorry because you will not be offered the sacred thread. [chuckles] That's all right. —Initiations and Gāyatrī of Devotees, Going to London—August 11, 1968, Montreal, 68o811IN-MONTREAL [38:50 Minutes]

In the above-quoted initiation lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that in Vedic culture it is essential for men to get the sacred thread along with the Gāyatrī mantra, whereas for women the sacred thread is not required because she is expected to be married and protected. By virtue of her marriage, if her husband is a *brāhmaṇa* then she automatically becomes a *brāhmaṇi* and hence she does not need to get her sacred thread separately. So, from this lecture, it is clear that a woman becomes a *brāhmaṇi* by her virtue of being a *brāhmaṇa*'s wife and hence a woman cannot become an independent *brāhmaṇi* on her own.³⁰ In this lecture Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes that in Vedic culture getting married to a *brāhmaṇa* is equivalent to a woman getting a sacred thread, although she does not have to wear it to show her status separately.

Hence, we find that in the author(s)' version of this lecture a good quantity of the words (in emphasis) is eclipsed by the

30 Not married divorced or unprotected in anyways is not an option for women in Vedic culture and tradition.

magic ellipses. Moreover, on pages 232 to 242 the author(s) build upon their false premises about *upavīta* or sacred thread only to beguile a false narrative that according to Śrīla Prabhupāda, for both men and women alike, the sacred thread is not integral to chanting Gāyatrī and that it is not an indispensable prerequisite to become a *dīkṣā-guru*.³¹ On the contrary, we find that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s actual words indicate his patience and great care in imparting Vedic culture – to those born in the western egalitarian cultures – which was not aimed at offering mere emotional consolations, but to inspire them to take up Vedic lifestyle and pure devotional service. Since those words did not fit their false narrative regarding female *dīkṣā-guru*, the author(s) employed their “magic ellipses.” In the guise of quoting Śrīla Prabhupāda, the author(s) simply shove their agenda down the throats of the devotees.

“FDG are Lord Kṛṣṇa’s dīkṣā-gurus?” – dangerous hermeneutics

On pages 174 and 175 of their book, the author(s) audaciously pose as paṇḍits with regards to Vedic scriptures, Vedic tradition, and the Vedic culture, but ultimately it exposes their deep ignorance as shown below:

However, we frankly see no problem in a lady dīkṣā-guru handing a thread even if she doesn’t wear one. We are unable to visualize negative consequences accruing from that. – page 174

What is the authority or the basis for the author(s) of the book in question assuring the devotee community that nothing inauspicious will occur if a lady guru hands the sacred thread to her disciple, which is totally violates the *śāstric* injunctions? We have already established based on evidence from scriptures that one cannot remove his sacred thread at any time, nor can a woman wear a sacred thread. How can the author(s) claim that women who are not eligible to undergo the sacred thread

31 “... are incalculably more important than a few strands of cotton, especially as wearing or holding the upavīta thread is not integral to chanting Gāyatrī mantras. In any case, Śrīla Prabhupāda never said that wearing the sacred thread was an indispensable prerequisite to become dīkṣā-guru.” – page 242 of book in question.

ceremony themselves are eligible to give the sacred thread to men? On pages 174 and 175 of their book, the author(s) in a preemptive strike on the oppositions' arguments, dive deep in their speculative hermeneutics without considering the dangerous conclusions it can lead to, as will be demonstrated herein below:

Actually, the hundreds of ISKCON ladies engaged in dressing the Deities already offer the sacred thread, upavīta, to Kṛṣṇa:

Offer Kṛṣṇa an upavīta, water for sipping, and ūrdhva-puṇḍra tilaka before putting on His upper cloth, chanting, respectively:

idam upavītam and the *kṛṣṇa-mūla-mantra*;

idam ācamanīyam and the *kṛṣṇa-mūla-mantra*;

idam tilakam and the *kṛṣṇa-mūla-mantra*...

Chant *idam upavītam* and the Deity *mūla-mantra* while showing the *upavītamudrā*; then offer a sacred thread to the Lord. – Pāñcarātra-Pradīpa, ISKCON GBC Press, Chapter 4, Standard Procedures for Deity Worship and Supplement 2 - Elaborate Deity Worship

If ladies can daily offer the sacred thread to the Lord Himself why can't they offer it to their disciples? And this arcana practice is not a new, "ISKCON thing"; in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, for instance, we see Aditi asking her husband, Kaśyapa Muni: "O brāhmaṇa, tell me the regulative principles by which I may worship the supreme master of the world so that the Lord will be pleased with me." (SB 8.16.22) Kaśyapa Muni gives her an elaborate process and, when listing the ingredients of the worship, he specifically instructs her to offer the Lord a sacred thread, "one should bathe the Lord with milk and dress Him with proper garments, a sacred thread [upavīta], and ornaments." (SB 8.16.39) – pages 174, 175

First of all, the author(s)' argument – because ladies offer the sacred thread to the Lord as part of Deity worship, they can hand over a thread to their male disciples as well – means that ladies become the guru of Jagat-guru, Paramātmā, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Hence, the author(s)' attempt to make ISKCON ladies as gurus will only end in a futile attempt of trying to become a guru of the Lord, the *anādi ādir Govinda* (Govinda Who has no beginning yet He is the beginning).

The second fallacy of this argument means that receiving the *upavīta* or the sacred thread from an ISKCON female *dīkṣā-guru* will present the male disciple a unique opportunity to become equal to the Lord Himself. The premise that the lady devotee who offers a sacred thread to the Lord is eligible to become a *dīkṣā-guru* of a male disciple only implies that the male disciple receiving the *upavīta* or the sacred thread from the ISKCON's female *dīkṣā-guru* becomes equal to the Lord Himself. Can the male disciple then imitate *rāsa-līla* with female devotees? So, implementing female *dīkṣā-gurus* within ISKCON will facilitate the growth of *māyāvada-paramaparā* since the male disciples of FDG *paramaparā* will become one with Kṛṣṇa.

Thirdly, the author(s)' recommendation to implement the FDG system within ISKCON based on the above-mentioned logic are akin to endorsing the *prakṛta-sahajīya* mentality of imitating Lord Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-līla*. If offering a sacred thread to the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa authorizes ISKCON ladies to accept male disciples and adorn them with the *upavīta* then by the same logic why can't male devotees reading the sections of vedic scriptures that describe Lord Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa* dance, engage in their own versions of *rāsa* dance with female devotees? The author(s) continue:

Nothing in the text or in Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport indicates any restriction for ladies handling or handing a sacred thread. For the devotee quoted above the sacred thread is the “most significant problem” in the whole topic of women *dīkṣā-gurus*; but his argument, quite literally, is hanging by a thread. – pages 174, 175

In the purport to SB 8.16.39 the context is about women worshipping Deities at home and not whether women are eligible to receive a sacred thread. As per *pāñcarātra-vidhi* women at home can worship Deities and so adorning the Lord with *upavīta* as part of the Deity worship is allowed for women. It seems that, on page 175, the author(s) are deliberately diverting the attention of the readers. Decorating the Lord in His Deity form with a sacred thread is not the same as a guru giving the sacred thread along with the mantra to his disciple. The following analogy could help us to understand this topic better: a wife is certainly allowed to maintain the sacrificial fire and has the right to start the sacrificial fire by bringing the fire from previous day's fire sacrifice. However, it does not grant her automatic right to offer oblations to the sacrificial fire herself. Rather it is her husband who offers the oblations to the sacrificial fire on her behalf. As we have shown repeatedly, the author(s)' understanding about *śāstric* injunctions is poor if not dangerously shallow; their views that the opposing arguments are weak only indicate that they are in total illusion. On the contrary, the author(s)' hope to forcefully implement FDG by such hook or crook hermeneutical methods will cause the very fabric of ISKCON to disintegrate.

Blasphemy of Śrīmatī Jāhnavā-devī and Śrīla Prabhupāda

We will now expose another fallacy employed by the author(s) on pages 43 through 47 of their book. In these pages, they only present themselves as “fascinating” storytellers. In their unrelenting attempt to dismantle the “Sunīti argument” (SB 4.12.32 purport) and minimize its prominence, they walk down the treacherous paths of sheer mental speculation (*manokalpanam*) and blasphemy of scriptures (*śruti-śāstra-nindanam*). Let us first consider the passages on pages 46 and 47 of the contentious book:

The three previous questions had dealt with “the place of women” in ISKCON; if women could become paṇḍitas; and

if there were any such paṇḍitas in the West. When Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed that yes, a woman can become a guru in disciplic succession he was talking about a normal human woman who learns the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. **Jāhnavādevī wasn’t presented as an exclusive excellent exception, as a personality beyond the beyond that women can never emulate.** No, Jāhnavā-devī was mentioned as an illustration of a principle, as a model that normal women could follow. Therefore, notwithstanding her superexcellent status as a divine śakti, Śrīmatī Jāhnavā-devī is, as a reference and as an example for ISKCON ladies, immensely more relevant and important than Sunīti. p 46, 47

From the above citation from their book, it is very obvious that just to establish a concocted narrative regarding “the place of women,” they even try to reduce Jāhnavādevī, *Śakti-tattva*, to the ordinary mundane platform of a human woman. Another observation is that on page 45 of their book, the author(s) stoop further down to blaspheme Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instruction contained in SB 4.12.32 as merely a detail, **“placed on an artificially high pedestal.”** In the latter sections, we will establish the fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions contained in SB 4.12.32 purport is not only applicable in the context of all yugas, but also that it is the same system of initiation followed even today in ISKCON and are well based upon the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (verses 1.37–44).

In the quoted passages from pages 46 and 47 of their book, the author(s) go into great detail to explain the context of the conversation between Prof. O’Connell and Śrīla Prabhupāda because it is favorable to their position. Whereas while quoting the other conversation between Ātreya Ṛṣi and Śrīla Prabhupāda they conveniently omitted several sentences, not to mention removing context because it did not suit their motives.

The statement, **“Jāhnavā-devī wasn’t ... as a personality beyond the beyond that women can never emulate,”** is extremely offensive to *Śakti-tattva*. So, are the author(s) saying

that ISKCON women are equal to or more than **Jāhnavā-devī**, and like Her, they also can manifest four-handed forms? Moreover, the evidence is clear – from the conversation with Ātreya Ṛṣi, wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda states that “**Jāhnavā-devī**, was a very special case and she did not declare,” – which the author(s) masked off (within square brackets shown with strike-throughs added) in their exhibit on page 51, as shown below:

Prabhupāda: So a crazy man’s statement is not accepted. Child’s statement, crazy man’s statement, unauthorized person’s statement, blind man’s statement, we cannot accept.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: A woman’s statement?

Prabhupāda: Huh?

Ātreya Ṛṣi: A woman’s... [~~statement?~~]

Prabhupāda: If a woman is perfect in Kṛṣṇa consciousness... Just like Jāhnavā-devī, Lord Nityānanda’s wife, she was ācārya. She was ācārya. She was controlling the whole Vaiṣṇava community... [~~Ātreya Ṛṣi: Lord Nityānanda?~~]

~~Prabhupāda: Wife. Jāhnavā-devī.~~– She was controlling the whole Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: Do you have references about that in any of your books, Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Prabhupāda: I don’t think. But there are many ācāryas. Maybe somewhere I might have mentioned it. It is not that women cannot be ācārya. [~~Generally, they do not become. In a very special case. But Jāhnavā-devī was accepted as but she did not declare.~~]

– Room Conversation, San Diego, 29 June 1972

The readers can retrieve the conversation with Ātreya Ṛṣi from vedabase software and compare it with the above-cited version from the book under discussion, and carefully observe the emphasized strike-through parts.

On page 51, we can see that the author(s), intentionally skipped the strike-through emphasized lines – **“Generally, they do not become. In a very special case. But Jāhnavā-devī was accepted as but she did not declare.”** Why? – because it is antithetical to their previously stated narrative on page 47 that **“Jāhnavā-devī wasn’t presented as an exclusive excellent exception....”** The truth is that Śrīla Prabhupāda states that a woman’s statement is also not acceptable unless she is on the level of Jāhnavā-devī. What to call such tactics on the part of the author(s) to hide and mask vital information just to win an argument? Is it judgmental to state that such dirty tricks are nothing but intentional **misrepresentation** and **disregard of the instructions** of Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Despite, the significant reference to the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* in his SB 4.31.10 purport of Śrīla Prabhupāda (and references made by previous *ācāryas*), it is hard to believe that the author(s) did not perform the due diligence of researching and presenting the verses from the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* anywhere in their work spanning 292 pages. Could it be possible that the author(s) upon reviewing the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verses, rejected or swept those verses under the carpet since they found those verses not suiting their agenda? Furthermore, even though we published our research on the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* in 2019, the author(s) have not yet updated their book (2013) with statements or comments regarding the relevant *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* verses even as of today (mid-2022). On the contrary, they continue to distribute their 2013 edition freely and widely which seems unprofessional and not up to the proper scholarly standard. Moreover, over a span of 20+ years why is that the GBC had to pass multiple amendments to already approved FDG/WDG resolutions? Moreover, the truth is that the word jugglery employed by the author(s) in their book has hardly appealed to the heart of the devotees even after several years of its publication.

In concluding this section, it is clear that the author(s) are not living up to their proclamation made on page 24 of their book that Śrīla Prabhupāda's words should be conclusive. By doctoring his correspondences and conversations, by word-juggling and denying the direct meanings contained in Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to SB 4.12.32, they effectively state that the Bhaktivedanta Purports and his words on this topic are not conclusive. This also renders their *siddhānta-sthāpanam* or principle stand ("mahājano yena gataḥ a panthāḥ") of accepting the Ācārya's words as conclusive a mere lip service.

Violating the *paramparā* instructions

Throughout their book, the author(s) not only contradict our previous *ācāryas'* views but in many places they also severely criticize them both directly and indirectly.

Criticisms of Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda

On pages 88-90 of their book, the author(s) appear to be criticizing Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda with their directly opposing comments. To establish the FDG system at any cost, they subject the statements of our *ācāryas* to their "humane or psychological" speculations resulting in egregious and blatant blasphemy. Let us consider some passages from those pages as below:

Nevertheless, it's not that the son of a high-court judge cannot become a high-court judge himself. It's certainly not a disqualification to be born as sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, or as other descendants of personal associates of Lord Caitanya. Although such glorious birth doesn't guarantee or certify one's status as a dikṣā-guru, it certainly offers extraordinary opportunities to imbibe the devotional culture and to get trained in scriptural knowledge. Should we be surprised that more gurus come from such families rather than from ordinary households? [page 89]

In the above passage on page 89, the author(s) attempt to explain that caste gosvāmīs are not necessarily to be rejected

because they were born in a particular family descending from personal associates of Lord Caitanya. First of all, it is not truly representing the objections raised by devotees concerning *jāta-gosāis*.³² Faithful followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda understand the real intent behind the statements of the Founder-Ācārya in regards to the caste-gosvāmīs: that it is a philosophical discrepancy to determine one’s spiritual qualification based on familial lineage alone. In his purport to Cc *Ādi* 12.27, Śrīla Prabhupāda cites the exact reason for ISKCON not recognizing the caste gosvāmīs. In that purport, it is stated that one who is in the householder status should not adopt the title of gosvāmī or gosvāminī. However, how is it that in the lineage of Bipina Bihārī Gosvāmī there are several female *dīkṣā-gurus* who despite being householders still have taken on the title gosvāminī?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura did not recognize the caste gosvāmīs because they were not in the line of the six gosvāmīs in the renounced order who were direct disciples of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu — namely Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrīla Bhaṭṭa Raghunātha Gosvāmī, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said that the gr̥hastha āśrama, or the status of family life, is a sort of concession for sense gratification. Therefore a gr̥hastha should not falsely adopt the title gosvāmī. The ISKCON movement has never conferred the title gosvāmī upon a householder. [Cc *Ādi* 12.27 purport, paragraph 2]

In light of the above cited Cc *Ādi* 12.27 purport, what is the locus standi of the author(s) when they continue to press for using the caste gosvāminīs of the Bipina Bihārī Gosvāmī lineage as precedence for implementing FDG? Is this not a direct violation of the authority of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura?³³

32 A sect (caste *gosvāmī*) wherein one acquires “gosvāmī” title and position through family lineage.

33 See latter sections for evidence to ascertain the caste *gosvāmī* inclination of Bipina Bihārī Gosvāmī.

Continuing with the statements from passages on page 89 of the book in contention:

As far as the caste gosvāmīs, those who claim to be gurus by hereditary right – even without the necessary qualifications and the appropriate mood – Śrīla Prabhupāda often criticizes them, as in the following passage from Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta:

There are many caste gosvāmīs who professionally create some disciples who do not care for them or their instructions. Such spiritual masters are satisfied simply to get some material benefits from their disciples. Such a relationship is condemned by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who calls such spiritual masters and disciples a society of cheaters and cheated.

– Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* 24.330, purport [page 89]

The above, though, doesn't justify lumping together and branding as heretics all the thousands of individuals who are kin to members of the various parivāras and who received – even as their legal name – the Gosvāmī designation. The wholesale dismissal of all the women *dikṣā-gurus* of these lineages simply because they might have had family connections with descendants of associates of Lord Caitanya is unwarranted. Imagining that whoever possesses a biological connection with a Vaiṣṇava must be rejected as a deviant *jāta-gosāi* (caste gosvāmī) appears, frankly speaking, absurd. [p 90]

What are we to make of the above comment? Are the author(s) arguing that some of the female *dikṣā-gurus*, who were in householder life with the title “goswamini,” are bonafide and that Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement, “The ISKCON movement has never conferred the title gosvāmī upon a householder,” is absurd? Are they arguing that despite these FDG's familial connections with the *jāta-gosāi* they are indeed spiritually connected with the *śikṣā* line of Lord Caitanya? On what basis do the author(s) make such statements that seem to undermine our *ācārya*'s words? Are they implying that they know something more than what is explained within the ocean of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books? In a total of 292 pages, despite quoting

extensively from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings and appearing to speak in a general balanced manner they actually argue against the conclusions of our previous *ācāryas*. A simple search for the term “*jāta-gosāi*” in the Vedabase software yields only 2 results. In one of those two results, Śrīla Prabhupāda says (cited below) that *jāta-gosāis* are not bonafide and do not come under the spiritual line: “*evaṁ paramparā ...*”

So the smārtas, they cannot understand the... Smārta, jāta-gosāi. The smārtas, to pull on their business, so have become gosvāmīs. But actually, they are not devotees. So these gosvāmīs will go to a devotee and one who is willing to accept a spiritual master. Then they will offer different kinds of mantras: “You want to worship Kṛṣṇa? All right. I will give you kṛṣṇa-mantra. Do you want to worship Kālī? I will give you kālī-mantra.” This way the business is going on. — *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.12–15, February 4, 1971, Gorakhpur. [710204SB-GORAKHPUR 51:16 Minutes]

In the following lecture, cited below (emphasis ours), Śrīla Prabhupāda says that one should not attach any credit to someone just because they are born in that lineage. Whereas what the author(s) are claiming in their book is just the opposite.

This Śukrācārya... Śukrācārya means jāta-gosāi: by semina they become ācārya. The semina. That is the, in India, guru-varṇśa. Guru-varṇśa, guru meaning spiritual master, the spiritual master, varṇśa. That is disciplic succession. **Evaṁ paramparā that is guru-varṇśa, not by semina.** But that is going on. The Śukrācārya: **“This is my guru’s family.”** Guru’s family... **“He has begotten a child, so something must be given. His credit is he’s begotten child. Therefore something must be given.”** So this is going on, Śukrācārya. — *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.49—October 29, 1974, Māyāpur, 741029SB-MAYAPUR [37:35 Minutes]

Śrīla Prabhupāda cautioned us to not associate with *jāta-gosāis* in any fashion whether directly or indirectly to the extent that we should not try to understand or follow the behavior of *jāta-*

gosāis. In light of such heavy instructions, it is interesting that the author(s) seem to be clearly disregarding the instructions of our Founder-Ācārya – using the female *dikṣā-gurus* belonging to the *jāta-gosāi* lineages as precedence to introduce female *dikṣā-gurus* within ISKCON.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are confusing” – exposed

In the below-quoted passage from page 43 of the book in contention, the author(s) deliberately attempt to establish that the statements contained in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s personal correspondences and private conversations are more important than the statements contained in his purports. Let us consider the passage on page 43 of the book in contention (emphasis ours), which demonstrates that the method of exegesis employed by the author(s) are self-defeating at best:

“But Books Are More Important than Other Sources”

One might argue that words in Śrīla Prabhupāda books have a higher value of evidence than his instructions in lectures, conversations, or letters, and therefore the expression in the purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.12.32 – “being a woman” (or even the original “and also a woman”) – surpasses and supplants all other references and stands as the topmost, ultimate instruction on the topic of women *dikṣā-gurus*.

We tend to agree with the general idea that books constitute, in general, stronger evidence than other sources; at the same time, it’s a fact that when taken out of context, certain passages in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books might generate confusion and even false conclusions. For instance, in the eighth chapter of *The Nectar of Devotion*, one of his most important works, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote (emphasis ours):

One should begin the worship of the demigod Gaṇapati, who drives away all impediments in the execution of devotional service. In the *Brahma saṁhitā* it is stated that Gaṇapati worships the lotus feet of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva and in that way has become auspicious for the devotees in clearing out all impediments. Therefore, all devotees should worship Gaṇapati.

This sounds like a straightforward, clear, and all-encompassing instruction; should we take it as a foundational injunction for the whole of ISKCON for the next ten thousand years? Should we promote installing Gaṇapati (Gaṇeśa) in every temple and every devotee’s home in the world? Perhaps it would be better to wait a bit, as, when specifically asked about the worshipping Gaṇeśa, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, in a letter:

Concerning Ganesa worship, it is not actually necessary for us. But, if someone has a sentiment for getting the blessings of Ganesa to get large amounts of money for Krishna’s service, then it is all right but anyone who takes up this kind of worship must send me at least 100,000 dollars monthly—not less. If he cannot send this amount, then he cannot do Ganesa worship. – Letter to Bhakta dasa, 1 February 1975

In chapter 8 of “The Nectar of Devotion” (NOD), Śrīla Prabhupāda, quoting from *Brahma-saṁhitā* states – **“Gaṇapati worships the lotus feet of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva,** and hence he is clearing all impediments in the path of devotional service of the devotees and hence all devotees should worship **Gaṇapati.”** Whereas, the author(s) immediately raise a rhetorical question, **“Therefore, all devotees should start Gaṇapati worship** in ISKCON centers by **installing the deity of Gaṇapati?”** This is a tactic to divert the attention of the readers.

Among the gamut of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, those teachings contained within his books are primary and absolute as stated in the introductory note of “Vedabase” software, which is used by all ISKCON devotees. The answer to this question lies very much within the books written by Śrīla Prabhupāda, as can be seen below (emphasis added):

The spiritual master is sometimes glorified as *sarva-devamayo guruḥ* (Bhāg. 11.17.27). By the grace of the guru, the spiritual master, one can understand the different kinds of devas. The word deva refers to God, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the original source of all the demigods, who are also called

devas. ...Kṛṣṇa is known as Acyuta (*senayor ubhayor madhye ratham sthāpaya me 'cyuta*). By worshipping Acyuta, Kṛṣṇa, one automatically worships all the demigods. ...[SB 10.1.56 purport]

“As pouring water on the root of a tree energizes the trunk, branches, twigs, and everything else, and as supplying food to the stomach enlivens the senses and limbs of the body, **simply worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead through devotional service automatically satisfies the demigods**, who are parts of that Supreme Personality.” [SB 4.31.13 text translation]

We can also understand, from a conversation cited below, the meaning of *sarva-devamayo guruḥ*:

Yāsodānandana: Prabhupāda, in the Bhāgavatam it is mentioned, *sarva-devāmayo guruḥ* [SB 11.17.27]. What is the meaning? Prabhupāda: “Guru is the representation of all gods and demigods - *Morning walk, Feb. 4, 1975, Honolulu*

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave all ISKCON centers and all ISKCON householder devotees the system of performing every day “*guru-puja*,” through which his statements in NOD chapter 8, about the worship of **Gaṇapati**, are fulfilled; the worship of guru automatically accomplishes the worship of **Gaṇapati**.

Elsewhere the author(s)’ argue that the statement mentioned in the SB 4.12.32 purport is as ambiguous as the case of Gaṇeśa worship mentioned in chapter 8 of NOD. This is an immature understanding and an exaggeration as well. It begs the question as to why, in the case of Gaṇeśa worship mentioned in chapter 8 of NOD, the devotees explicitly wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda seeking clarification, whereas they did not seek any clarifications in the case of Sunīti not initiating her son as mentioned in SB 4.12.32 purport. The answer is that the SB 4.12.32 purport was obvious, straightforward, and was crystal clear in light of so many instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda contained elsewhere regarding the role of a woman under protection, and hence there was no need to seek clarifications. During the manifest presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda, why did the devotees not raise such questions of so-called editorial blunders

to the SB 4.12.32 purport? This indicates that the recently introduced narratives against the SB 4.12.32 purport have their roots in the demoniac egalitarianism and feminism. In summary of this section, although one may consult Śrīla Prabhupāda’s correspondences for more information or clarification, we don’t have to use this method in all circumstances, especially when the instructions contained in his purports such as SB 4.12.32 are conspicuous, unlike the instruction contained in chapter 8 of NOD regarding Gaṇapati worship. This is the way we understand and follow simultaneously both the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda contained in the cited text from NOD and cited letter correspondence to Bhakta dāsa. Where is there room for confusion or speculations, when one studies Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books daily systematically and meticulously? Moreover, a question may be raised: why is it that not a single devotee raised any doubts or questions regarding the perceived contradictions of female gurus – statements of the SB 4.12.32 purport versus the statements in those correspondences and informal conversations supporting FDG – to Śrīla Prabhupāda during his manifest presence? The answer is simple:

1. The devotees knew that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are the primary evidence.
2. They approached Śrīla Prabhupāda only in cases where there was confusion: in the case of SB 4.12.32, it was clear to the devotees.
3. Śrīla Prabhupāda considered women leaders to be an unfortunate situation; as evident from his purport to SB 4.16.23:

It is very appropriate to compare a powerful king like Pṛthu to a lion. In India, kṣatriya kings are still called *siṅgh*, which means “lion.” Unless rogues, thieves, and other demoniac people in a state are afraid of the executive head, who rules the kingdom with a strong hand, there cannot be peace or prosperity in the state. Thus it is most regrettable when a woman becomes the executive head instead of a lionlike king. In such a situation the people are considered very unfortunate. [SB 4.16.23]

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